

VZCZCXYZ0002  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLB #1225/01 3201624  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 161624Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6042  
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3688  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0568  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0096  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 3545  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1486  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1426  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3957  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3827  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4221  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001225

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [SA](#)  
SUBJECT: KATAEB AND MARCH 14 SECRETARIAT COMPLAIN OF NEGLECT

REF: BEIRUT 1214

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i. Thomas F. Daughton for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Saad Hariri provoked a crisis in the Kataeb party by allotting it the social affairs ministry instead of the education ministry, Kataeb Vice President Salim el Sayegh told us. Kataeb will remain in the majority but not in the March 14 secretariat, he added. El Sayegh alleged that Syria and its Lebanese allies are trying to push all strategic and security issues to the National Dialogue, and said Kataeb believes that Hariri should task his Christian allies to assume a hawkish role to offset the opposition on strategic issues. A downcast March 14 Secretary General Fares Souaid echoed el Sayegh's advice for Hariri and complained that the March 14 base is feeling a sense of "political defeat." He said that the March 14 secretariat is seeking a new role in the current consensus-oriented atmosphere. End Summary.

KATAEB MIFFED AT HARIRI'S AFFRONT  
-----

¶2. (C) When PM-designate Hariri allotted Kataeb the social affairs ministry instead of education, he provoked an "internal and external crisis," Kataeb Vice President and new Minister of Social Affairs Salim el Sayegh told polchief on November 13. While "a few" in the Kataeb politburo (reportedly MP Samy Gemayel) urged that the party not participate in the cabinet in response to the perceived affront, he said, party head Amine Gemayel decided to overlook the slight. Despite ongoing consultations, el Sayegh said, Kataeb had failed to extract any concessions from Hariri, such as a commitment to increase the social affairs ministry's budget. El Sayegh attended the November 15 meeting of the ministerial statement drafting committee in his new role as minister of social affairs, a clear sign that the party will participate in the cabinet.

¶3. (C) Kataeb has once again suspended its participation in the March 14 secretariat, el Sayegh said, in response to a lack of coordination and moral support. Kataeb was demanding the development of a political plan and increased coordination inside the secretariat, he said. "If they won't stand by us in a crisis," he complained, "when will we need them?" Kataeb remains in the majority, he claimed, but it will not support a ministerial statement "legalizing" Hizballah's weapons.

¶4. (C) El Sayegh assessed that Hariri is trying to stake out a more neutral position. "Hariri wants to be prime minister of all Lebanese, and the Saudis are pressing him to accommodate the Syrians," he explained. The best strategy, el Sayegh said, is for Hariri to "distribute roles" to his Christian allies so they can assume a hawkish stance to offset Hizballah's influence. Syria and its Lebanese allies are trying to push all strategic and security issues to the National Dialogue, he asserted, and Hariri's position on the ministerial statement will clarify his attitude.

#### MARCH 14 SECRETARIAT REASSESSING ROLE

-----

¶5. (C) Hizballah is seeking to make Hariri the "mayor" in charge of economic issues while it exercises control over security decisions in a return to the 1990s power balance, March 14 Secretary General Fares Souaid told polchief on November 13. Souaid claimed that Hariri had accepted that role out of his desire to be PM and his calculation of new regional dynamics. Souaid described the March 14 base as increasingly disillusioned and rejected the concept of a "sleeping" March 14 that Hariri could call on to be inflexible "on demand" should he need to justify his actions to the opposition.

¶6. (C) The March 14 secretariat is considering what path to take, Souaid said, in light of Hariri's repositioning and decreasing Saudi financial support. Lebanese Forces head Samir Geagea has bruited the creation a sub-group to assume militant stances that Hariri cannot or will not take, but Souaid assessed that such an approach would quickly lead to direct confrontation with Hariri and convert March 14 into an anti-Sunni forum. (Note: Geagea admitted to the Ambassador on November 4 that such a March 14 rump group would not include Hariri's Future Movement or several prominent March 14 Christian figures. End note.) In addition the secretariat, along with Amine Gemayel, is reliant on Saudi funding, Souaid said, although he believed that Geagea has enough funds to take an independent course.

¶7. (C) Souaid dismissed Kataeb's calls for reforms in the secretariat, alleging that the party's "crisis" stemmed from internal divisions between Amine Gemayel and his son, Samy. While Samy preferred an extreme response to Hariri's offer, Souaid said, Amine insisted on the need to maintain relationships, especially with the Saudis.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Many March 14 Christians are currently trying to process Hariri's perceived generosity to their opposition rivals, the local implications of the Syrian-Saudi rapprochement, and the conflicting priorities of their allies. Some are also unhappy with the political tide that has been moving since the 2008 Doha agreement in the direction of a consensus-oriented government that relegates strategic issues to the National Dialogue. We will report septel on the ministerial statement negotiations, which will be a clear indicator of the broader political mood.

DAUGHTON